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ABSTRACT

Pedagogical grammar is the presentation of grammatical information for teaching purposes. Two important distinctions are relevant here: reference books versus teaching grammars programmed into a course, and generalized versus specialized grammars, (depending on the extent to which they have been designed to meet specific teaching/learning situations). The more promising type of grammar is one that goes beyond the reference function and facilitates in a systematic and explicit way the learning of the target language. Textbook designers should abandon the "parasitic" approach which merely simplifies one or more theoretical linguistic description, as does the "orthodox" approach, which follows one linguistic theory only. Naive eclecticism is, however, no solution. The designer should devise and adapt descriptions according to psychological and sociolinguistic principles. As a starting point, the approach of David Ausubel seems highly appropriate. By adopting his theory on the use of various kinds of organizers, the designer may frame a pedagogical grammar that promotes meaningful learning, something which a patchwork grammar, naively eclectic and atheoretical, is unlikely to do. Organizers, which may be anything from visual non-linguistic marks on paper to highly abstract notional categories, are classifications based on principles that are didactic as well as linguistic. (Author/AMH)

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Pedagogical Grammar

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Pedagogical grammar comes within the domain of language pedagogy. That is to say, an important part of the systematic study of language teaching is concerned with the presentation of grammatical information relevant to the needs of the learner. The writing of grammars or segments of grammar in accordance with contemporary theories of language is still in its initial stage. Linguistics is still a young science. It is therefore not at all surprising that such applied projects as the design of pedagogical grammar have not really got off the ground at all. If learners are presented with up-to-date accounts of the target language they are usually confronted with what might be termed patchwork grammars, i.e. scaled-down versions of an assortment of theoretical works representing (sometimes) conflicting theories. The time has come for a reappraisal of what a pedagogical description should really be and a search for an independent rationale for designing it.

If we adopt Corder's definition of pedagogical grammar as "the presentation of information about language for teaching purposes" (Corder 1973: 154) a number of distinctions need to be made for the purpose of this discussion.
Firstly we should deal with larger comprehensive descriptions of the target language before considering smaller segments separated out to go into teaching units.

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Secondly the established distinction between grammars, which concentrate on the language system and dictionaries, which are primarily lexical should be maintained. Thirdly it ought to be possible to talk in terms of generalized versus specialized grammars, where specialized grammars such as contrastive pedagogical grammars are in some way derivable from the more general ones. And finally we should keep in mind different functions served by language descriptions. A grammar could be, and usually is, a reference book for teachers and learners. It is argued here, however, that a pedagogical grammar worthy of its name, should be more than a reference book; it should in a dynamic sense be a teaching grammar, that is, it should facilitate in an explicit and systematic way the learning of the target language. Besides designing the grammar to help the learner in this way, the pedagogical grammarian should also keep in mind the materials designer and provide him with categories and indications that are readily exploitable by those who wish to organize curricula and devise textbooks with exercises. In fact, such a grammar would be primarily for the advanced student, the teacher and the textbook writer, i.e. the kind of user Jespersen had in mind when he wrote A Modern English Grammar (1909-1949). From this type of grammar simpler versions can be derived providing the "essentials", or more specilized versions for specific consumers. For practical purposes it may be necessary to publish the generalized grammar, which should be very large, in separate sections.

The problems of designing pedagogical grammars naturally begin with the search for basic principles. Recent work done in this area, particularly in the United States, has placed most of the emphasis on the linguistic principles involved. In fact we may see this approach whereby the pedagogical grammar has a primarily theoretical linguistic input, as parasitic.

It feeds basically on one, or possibly on more than one theoretical linguistic corpus of material. Less attention has been paid to other potential input sources such as work done in sociology and educational psychology. This perhaps is the result of not examining exactly what is demanded of the grammar. In short, there has been a lack of consumer orientation. When we consider that we are writing grammars for learners we must begin to think about learning and this necessarily introduces a psychological aspect to the problem. Another reason why less attention has been paid to framing language information in a nonparasitic way is that the whole process of teaching the information has been left to a later stage. In other words, the grammar has not really been pedagogical but merely a source of raw material for pedagogical processing by individual teachers and textbook writers. Finally, up and until recently, there seemed to be a certain harmony between linguistic theory and psychological theory that did not require any radical changes in grammar design. However, a shift in the field of psychology did not herald the appearance of a new type of teaching grammar, nor did changes in linguistics. Owen Thomas' grammar (Thomas, 1965) was attacked by Lawler and Selinker (Lawler and Selinker 1971) precisely for bringing linguistics unadulterated to the classroom and this was not classic structural linguistics but transformational grammar. The writers oppose Thomas' idea that a pedagogical grammar should simply follow the "best scientific grammar available" (Thomas 1965: 5) and suggest that a more empirical approach is necessary going from what is observed in the classroom and from the intuitions of language teachers. In our search for new basic principles this kind of reorientation has to be a necessary first step. As Corder says:

> The problem of devising an efficient pedagogical grammar is.....more a psycholinguistic than a theoretical linguistic one. The form our pedagogical grammar takes will be dependent

> on what we believe to be the psychological processes involved in language learning. (Corder 1973: 331-2).

One disadvantage of theoretical linguistic description for language pedagogy is its more abstract technical features. Fries' attempts to establish form classes in grammar independent of meaning by labelling them with numbers seems to hinder rather than facilitate the learning of a language when the learner is after all, primarily interested in conveying meaning and not in how this is effected. And no teacher can seriously consider anything but the most elementary formalisations of transformational-generative or stratificational grammar. But even if we grant that one could reduce this disadvantage by reintroducing traditional labels as Paul Roberts did for Bloomfieldian grammar or avoiding the more complex tree diagrams as he and others have done for Chomskyan grammar, we are still left with a further, more important disadvantage. The problem really is that contemporary linguists have until recently been so concious of the necessity to establish their field as a "scientific" discipline, that they have been led to restrict their field far beyond that area which is of interest and relevance to language learners The "best scientific grammar" may in fact turn out to be the least helpful. Writers of pedagogical grammar may well turn to linguists like Jespersen who have been criticised for inconsistency and vagueness and yet who have had a much wider view of what linguistics should be dealing with. Typically it is these more comprehensive linguists who demonstrate a sympathy and an understanding for the task of the language teacher. Even in his Philosophy of Grammar (1924) Jespersen showed a concern for relating what he called "higher grammar" to school grammar (Jespersen 1924: 356) and it is there that he stated that his Modern English Grammar was for advanced students of English.

The goals and techniques of contemporary theoretical linguistics as represented by such schools as transformational-generative grammar may well be justifiable but writers of teaching grammars are more likely to turn to scholarly descriptions that are less technical and deal with areas, particularly areas of semantics, which are less easily described along scientific lines. In this respect, it is interesting to note that generative semantics, which is attempting to deal with languages in a more comprehensive way, going beyond structure and investigating meaning more systematically for itself and including in its studies the links between languages and the "outside world" (R. Lakoff 1972: 909), comes closer to the needs of language learners. It is therefore not surprising that we find Lakoff at a teacher's conference expressing the following sympathetic view:

> Applied linguists know where second language learners make mistakes and what kind of errors they make (...) Thus in this area, as in many others, progress can best be made by theoretical and applied linguists if they will work together as equal partners. (R. Lakoff 1974).

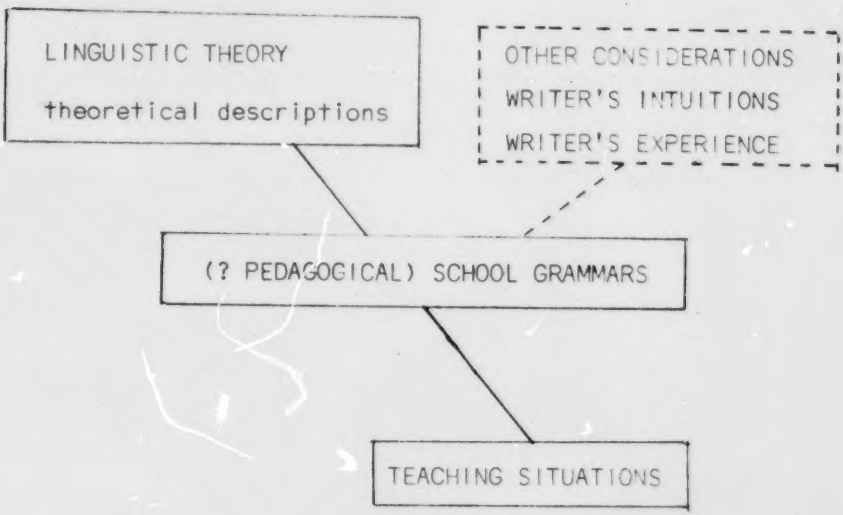
This contrasts sharply with Chomsky's statements at the Northeast Conference on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (1965), where he declared himself to be both not competent to speak on language teaching and also sceptical about the significance of recent advances in either linguistics or psychology.

The implication, which was perhaps salutary at the time, was that contemporary linguistics and language teaching should get on with their separate business until a real reason appears for anyone to relate their fields. It is clear thet, even if we were to adopt the parasitic approach, the more developed theory of Chomsky and his orthodox followers would require not only a vast simplification of the technical aspects but also considerable

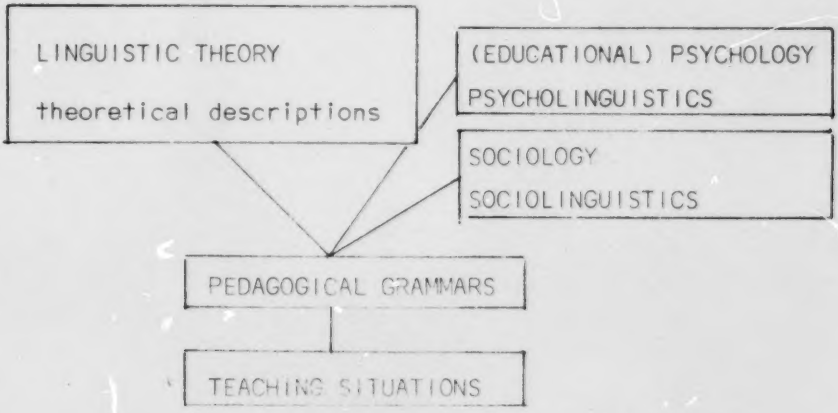
extension beyond what the theory seems competent to deal with. With generative semantics, even in its present fragmentary state, the scope of the investigations holds out more promise for the "parasitic" applied linguist. But the problem of simplification would of course remain.

In applying the work done by theoretical linguists to the problems of pedagogical grammar we may be parasitic or non-parasitic, according to how much we process theoretical descriptions along independent lines. We may also be more or less orthodox. An orthodox approach would work within the confines of one theoretical school of linguists, regardless of how the processing is carried out. Alternatively we may decide to use theories that are in conflict but which both contribute useful applicable insights into the target language. The reason for being non-orthodox may be more practical, namely, that no linguistic theory is sufficiently developed to sustain an orthodox approach. In fact, this last reason has lately become popular in language teaching circles as the principle of **eclecticism** (see for example Greenbaum 1973). If we were to categorize the Grammar of Contemporary English (Quirk et al. 1973), it would be as an electic, i.e. non-orthodox grammar. It is questionable to what extent it is non-parasitic, however, since the processing does not seem to be explicitly pedagogical in the sense outlined in this paper although pedagogical considerations have obviously contributed to its design, at least in part. A truly pedagogical grammar should be both non-orthodox, if its basic underlying principles require it, and non-parasitic, that is, processing contributions from linguistic theory in a principled way according to criteria independent of that theory. It is the necessary existence of such criteria that suggest a term other than "electic" for our approach to linguistics proper: perhaps "selective",

or more explicitly it may be termed an approach of "principled selection". This naturally leads on to the question of what these principles should be.



1. The standard approach (patchwork: parasitic, non-orthodox).



2. The radical approach (pedagogical: nonparasitic,

non-orthodox). The processing of source material is selective and principled.

The development of a theory of pedagogical grammar, if such a theory is seen to be desirable, will require considerable work on examining such source disciplines as linguistics and psychology for relevant material. This work is naturally hampered by the fragmentary character of much of the research done in these fields. Both linguistics and psychology as also sociology are still very unsettled fields. What unifies the task of the pedagogical grammarian is, however, not the presence of comprehensive theories in the source disciplines but the pedagogical needs he establishes beforehand. His grammar must provide the learner with a description of the target language. To this extent he turns to the field of linguistics. The learner however may need certain specific areas of the language more than others or he may need more areas than are adequately described by available theories. If for example certain varieties of language, including certain literary varieties, come within the scope of a pedagogical grammar - because learners are felt to need them - it may occur that no linguistic theory has provided enough material describing these varieties. Here a pedagogical grammarian may initiate investigation into these areas and thus become a potential feedback source for less applied work. Again, a pedagogical grammarian must provide the learner with information that is readily understood. This calls at least for a simplification of terminology and for a restatement of information in familiar terms. This in turn requires some consumer research to establish what is or is not generally understandable. Then, a large amount of material will turn out to be quite irrelevant for the learner and this relates to what was said above concerning the technicalities of pure descriptions. It is important to note here that a

pedagogical description may not necessarily be less elaborate than a pure description. It may even be more so. But it will be a. understandable to the user and b. relevant to his needs. The way information should be framed is, as was suggested above, a psychological matter. For this reason, available theories in educational psychology need to be scanned and techniques and procedures adapted for realising this aim. Finally, sociological considerations may be taken into account with regard to what traditionally is called usage: that is, the links between the language system and specific situations or types of situation felt to be generally relevant for the user of the grammar. The sociological angle will gain in importance particularly where specialized grammars are being designed. But even in the generalized grammars such matters as the notion of speech act, speech event, variety, register and so forth will be important in that every learner needs information on how to relate the language system to real-life situations. Even if a large amount of such information is not included in the pedagogical grammar, the grammar will at least have to be framed in such a way that it facilitates more comprehensive statements in these areas.

To establish psychological principles for processing grammatical material, we have to take a stand as far as our general approach to learning psychology is concerned. This means, in broad terms, either a behaviouristic or cognitive approach. If we follow current trends it is likely that we opt for the latter, especially as cognitive psychology does not necessarily exclude behaviouristic principles but rather encompasses them within a broader framework. A cognitive pedagogical grammar will take special care to explain the rules of the target language and make them meaningful. It will not be satisfied with a straightforward presentation of distributional data that can be incorporated

into mechanical drills. It will pay considerable attention to the notional aspects of grammar since it is these which make structure meaningful and relate the raw data to what is familiar to the learner. Thus, while the data available for constructing exercises and drills along behaviouristic lines will be available in the grammar, there will also be extensive material for organising teaching work along cognitive lines with overt explanation of rules and other strategies for making the data available to the learner in a maximally comprehensive way.

It may be fruitful to adopt Ausubel's theory of organisers (Ausubel 1968) and his underlying distinction between rote learning as shared by humans and lower animals, and meaningful learning which is human-specific. A pedagogical grammar would seek to maximise meaningful learning, that is the learning of new data in a nonarbitrary nonverbatim manner, helping the learner to organise these data in his cognitive structure by linking the old with the new. The essential point is that the pedagogical element in the grammar should consist in assisting the natural processes of the human mind which are inherently organising in character. Although new information may be accepted and stored without resorting to meaningful learning, by means of mechanical habit formation, it seems to be the case that it will be learned better, that is retained longer and made available in a wider variety of situations if it is learned according to cognitive principles. As Chastain says:

> The fact that meaningful relationships enhance learning does not imply that rote learning is impossible, but that it is less effective and less productive (Chastain 1971: 87).

Organisers, which may be anything from visual non-linguistic marks on paper to highly abstract notional

categories, arrange the grammatical material in such a way as to facilitate on-the-spot learning by the learner who consults the work directly as well didactic programming by the teacher and the textbook writer. It is important to stress the fact that organisers are not simply devices whereby the linguistic material is sorted into categories just to present it formally in some organised way. It is principled classification and the principles are didactic and linguistic as well. Out of a number of various ways of classifying the material we choose that which we calculate will maximise efficient learning. It is this kind of classification which is absent in so many grammars, even in the Grammar of Contemporary English which contains such a wealth of useful material for the learner.

A pedagogical grammar should provide a network of organisers beginning with expository organisers where the material is judged to be totally new. These give the learner superordinate concepts which form the base for new information. These may be at very high level of abstraction and serve for the teacher as advance organisers, that is organisers that come early in a course or lesson and prepare the ground for detailed description. All organisers need to be learnable and stated in familar terms (Ausubel 1968, 149). They may be comparative in that they use concepts in cognitive structure that are similar, linking the new with the old and at the same time clarifying the difference to facilitate discrimination. They have a mediating role in that the new information is anchored temporarily to stable concepts in the mind of the learner before undergoing progressive discrimination (with the help of the teacher or textbook writer) so that the new concept itself becomes stable and independent. In this respect, in more specialised pedagogical grammars where the learner's characteristics can be more specifically itemized, contrastive information is

justified using the native language of the learners as a bridge between old and new. Interlingual comparisons in no way imply that learners will continue to use translation in the use of the target language. Translation is just another temporary mediating strategy (Ausubel 1968: 70 and 74). Finally the use of perceptual organisers should not be underestimated, that is built in mechanical aids like underlining, capitalisation etc. (Ausubel 1968: 330 ff). In this way, the teacher and textbook writer is provided with useful sets of categories which may immediately be used in the design of material aimed at explaining and practising various aspects of the target language. It also gives a great deal of help to the learner who directly consults the grammar in that it goes some way towards framing the information with respect to his needs as a learner and not just a seeker of facts.

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